

News Release

Health

Office of the Premier

COVID-19

Masks mandatory in indoor public places / exposure notification / changes to travel restrictions at Quebec border

08 October 2020

FREDERICTON (GNB) – The provincial government announced today that masks will become mandatory in most indoor public places effective at midnight tonight.

“Based upon what we are seeing in our neighbouring provinces and the outbreak in Moncton, we know how quickly the virus can spread through a community,” said Premier Blaine Higgs. “We must take every possible measure to prevent that from happening in our province.”

Masks will become mandatory in most indoor places. This includes:

- public spaces where the public and employees interact (retail businesses, malls, service centres, places of worship, restaurants and bars except while eating, etc.) and organized indoor gatherings in public spaces (e.g. weddings, funerals, etc.);
- common areas like lobbies, elevators and hallways, and public shared spaces including those in private sector and government workspaces; and
- public transportation.

Continuous mask use is still required in seated venues with one metre physical distancing.

Previously existing mask policies continue to apply in hospitals, health care settings, public schools and early childhood learning facilities.

As approved by the Pandemic Task Force, children under two are exempt from wearing masks, as well as those with a medical condition that prevents them from wearing a mask.

Inspection and enforcement officers from the Department of Justice and Public Safety surveyed 600 public spaces across the province to assess how many people were using a mask. They estimated the average number of people wearing masks is 36 per cent.

“Unfortunately, there are too many people who are not wearing their masks when required,” said Higgs. “We recognize this is a major announcement and businesses and individuals may need time to adjust. We are asking for people to comply immediately. Peace officers will be monitoring to ensure people are wearing masks as required.”

There are resources for businesses available on the provincial government’s coronavirus website including signs that can be printed and posted.

“It is about respecting and protecting each other,” said Dr. Jennifer Russell, chief medical officer of health. “Wearing masks or face coverings helps prevent you from unknowingly spreading COVID-19 and helps prevent the people around you from spreading it to you.”

Three new cases

Public Health reported three new cases of COVID-19 today. The new cases are:

- an individual between 20 and 29 in Zone 3 (Fredericton region) related to international travel and self-isolating.
- an individual between 30 and 39 in Zone 5 (Campbellton region). The case is under investigation and the individual is self-isolating.
- an individual between 40 and 49 in Zone 2 (Saint John region) related to travel outside of the Atlantic bubble and self-isolating.

The number of confirmed cases in New Brunswick is 225 and 199 have recovered. There have been two deaths, and the number of active cases is 24. Three patients are hospitalized with one in an intensive care unit. As of today, 82,365 tests have been conducted.

Exposure notification

Public Health has identified a positive case in a traveller who may have been infectious on Oct. 4 while on the following flights:

- Air Canada Flight 418 – from Toronto to Montreal; and
- Air Canada Flight 8792 – from Montreal to Saint John.

Anyone who travelled on these flights should self-monitor for symptoms for 14 days after the flight. Should any COVID-19 symptoms develop, they are directed to self-isolate and take the self-assessment online or call 811 to get tested.

New Brunswickers are encouraged to download the exposure notification app COVID Alert. The app is available for free download through the Apple or Google Play app stores. It was built with strong privacy protection and uses the Google and Apple Exposure Notification technology.

“COVID Alert is a secure, reliable and user-friendly app and it is an additional tool to help limit the spread of COVID-19,” said Russell.

If a New Brunswicker chooses to download the app and then tests positive for COVID-19, they will have the opportunity to receive a one-time key from Public Health that they can enter into the app. After the key is entered, within a day, the app will anonymously notify other users who may have come into close contact with that person. The app will direct users on next steps based upon public health advice.

New Brunswickers who use the app are reminded that it does not lessen the importance of measures such as physical distancing, regular handwashing, proper respiratory etiquette or wearing a face mask in public indoor spaces.

Changes to travel restrictions regarding a Quebec border community

Effective at midnight tonight, the twinning agreement that allowed for non-essential day trips by residents of Listuguj First Nation and Pointe-à-la-Croix, Quebec is suspended.

“We recognize the strong bonds on both sides of the Restigouche River and we intend to continue to work with municipalities in the Campbellton region, Listuguj First Nation and Pointe-à-la-Croix and with the Government of Quebec to help make sure that everyone is safe and has access to things they need,” said Higgs. “Given the situation in other provinces and in neighbouring areas of Quebec, we are being vigilant and frequently monitoring changes in those areas.”

At the entry point at Campbellton, residents of Listuguj First Nation and Pointe-à-la-Croix, Quebec, will be permitted entry to obtain groceries, prescription medications and essential goods and services not available to them in their own community, as it was prior to the twinning agreement.

Travel also continues to be permitted for work, medical appointments, to fulfill the terms of a child custody agreement and to obtain child care.

Students can continue to cross the border to attend school for kindergarten to Grade 8. High school students will be permitted entry on Friday, Oct. 9, but arrangements are being made to provide remote learning for high school students beginning on Tuesday, Oct. 13.

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